

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 574

By Miller

A RESOLUTION to honor the memory of Maurice White.

WHEREAS, the members of this General Assembly were greatly saddened to learn of the passing of Maurice White, an innovative and multitalented musician, singer, songwriter, record producer, arranger, and founder and leader of Earth, Wind & Fire (EW&F), one of the most popular and enduring musical groups of all time; and

WHEREAS, during the course of a long and distinguished career, Mr. White won seven Grammys and was nominated for twenty-one Grammys in total; and

WHEREAS, he was inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and the Vocal Group Hall of Fame as a member of EW&F and individually inducted into the Songwriters Hall of Fame; and

WHEREAS, as a producer, Mr. White worked with a wide variety of popular music artists, including Deniece Williams, Barbra Streisand, Neil Diamond, The Tubes, Cher, and The Emotions, with whom he won a Grammy for "Best of My Love," which reached number one on both the pop and R&B single charts; and

WHEREAS, in addition to Grammys, he had received the BET Lifetime Achievement Award, four American Music awards, three NAACP Image Awards, and several honors from ASCAP, to name but a few; and

WHEREAS, a native of Memphis, where he was a childhood friend of Booker T. Jones, Maurice White moved to Chicago as a teenager to work as a session drummer for Chess Records and played on recordings by great artists such as Etta James, Ramsey Lewis, Muddy Waters, The Impressions, Buddy Guy, and The Dells; and

WHEREAS, by 1966, he had joined the legendary Ramsey Lewis Trio as its drummer and played on nine albums recorded by the group, which won a Grammy for the song "Hold It Right There"; and

WHEREAS, in 1969, Mr. White and two friends formed "The Salty Peppers," which enjoyed some regional success; and

WHEREAS, feeling a need to explore new geography, Mr. White relocated the band from Chicago to Los Angeles and renamed it "Earth, Wind & Fire," the name reflecting the elements in his astrological chart; the band would eventually include his brothers, Verdine White and Fred White; and

WHEREAS, Mr. White made the African kalimba and a dynamic horn section integral parts of the band's sound, and EW&F "changed the face of black pop" as one of the best and most popular musical groups of the twentieth century; and

WHEREAS, fusing the musical genres of R&B, soul, funk, jazz, disco, pop, rock, Latin, and African, EW&F has sold over 100 million records worldwide, including the massive hits, "Shining Star," "That's the Way of the World," "Devotion," "Reasons," "Sing a Song," "Can't Hide Love," "Getaway," "Fantasy," "Love's Holiday," "September," "Boogie Wonderland," "After the Love Has Gone," and "Let's Groove," which helped program America's soundtrack of the 1970s and 1980s; and

WHEREAS, two Earth, Wind & Fire classic songs have been inducted into the Grammy Hall of Fame: "That's the Way of the World" and "Shining Star"; and

WHEREAS, Mr. White also wrote music for the stage, movies, and television, and EW&F's Grammy-winning version of "Got To Get You Into My Life," recorded for the film *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*, is arguably the best cover of a Beatles' song ever, even surpassing the original version by most counts; and

WHEREAS, health problems forced Mr. White to stop touring with EW&F in 1994, but he retained executive control of the band and remained active in music; and

WHEREAS, he served as executive producer of the EW&F tribute album, *Interpretations*, from which both Dwele's remake of "That's the Way of the World" and Meshell Ndegeocello's cover of "Fantasy" were nominated for a Grammy; and

WHEREAS, from time to time, Mr. White still appeared on stage with EW&F after his retirement from active touring; in 2004, he played with the band at the Grammy Awards Tribute to Funk and at a pre-Grammy party, where he performed EW&F's hit "September" with Alicia Keys; and

WHEREAS, Maurice White made immeasurable contributions to several genres of music as a singer, songwriter, performer, and leader of EW&F and had a profound impact on the music industry through his production, launching the careers of new artists and lending his signature sound to established musicians and singers; and

WHEREAS, he also greatly influenced a multitude of artists who followed, including Usher, Mary J. Blige, Prince, Pharrell Williams, India.Arie, Wyclef Jean, Phil Collins, Raphael Saadiq, Babyface, OutKast, Lenny Kravitz, Jill Scott, Justin Timberlake, Erykah Badu, and Wynton Marsalis, to name but a few; and

WHEREAS, Maurice White was a visionary as a musical artist and producer, and his absence deprives us of a great talent; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED NINTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE SENATE CONCURRING, that we celebrate the life of Maurice White, even as we mourn his passing, and reflect fondly on his legacy as a supremely gifted artist, singer, songwriter, producer, and the legendary founder and leader of Earth, Wind & Fire.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we express our sympathy and offer our condolences to Mr. White's family, friends, and legion of fans.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.